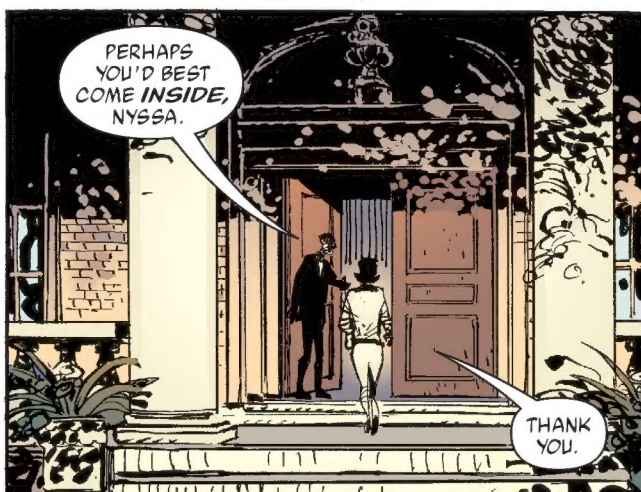
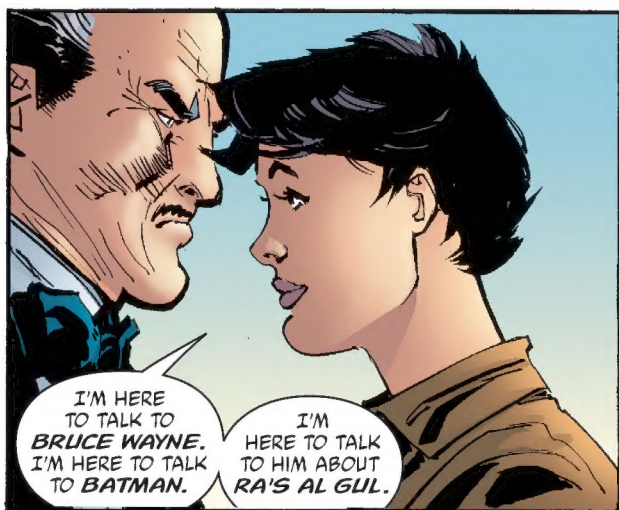
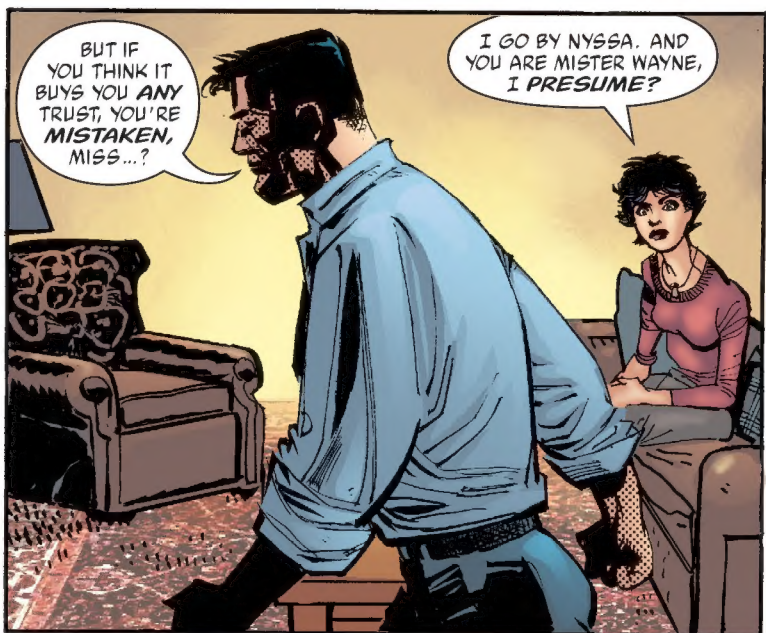
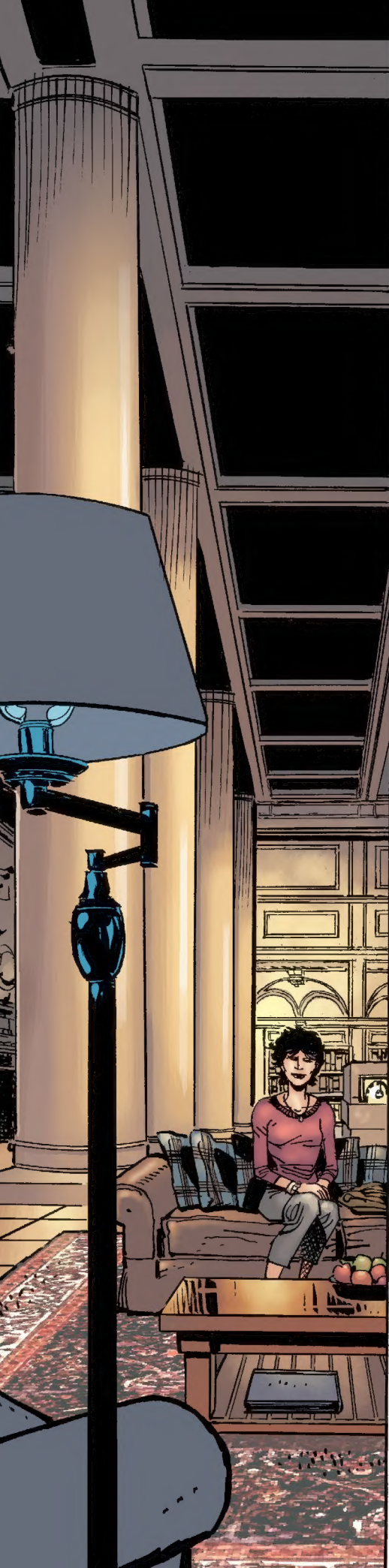








YOU'RE RIGHT, AND I'M SORRY.

I HAVE A **WEAKNESS** FOR THE **DRAMATIC**, I'M AFRAID, AND THE THOUGHT OF COMING TO YOUR DOOR AS I DID WAS **TOO MUCH TO RESIST.**



PLEASE ACCEPT MY **APOLOGY.**



YOU HAVE **THREE MINUTES** TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF

THAT'S **MORE THAN FAIR.**

FIRST THEN, LET ME **ASSURE** YOU, MY BUSINESS HERE CONCERNS **RA'S, NOT YOU.**

IT WAS **THROUGH** HIM THAT I LEARNED YOUR **SECRET**, AND I SWEAR, I HAVE NO INTEREST IN **REVEALING IT.**



YOU **THINK** YOU KNOW MY **SECRET.**

IF THAT IS HOW YOU WOULD HAVE IT.

REGARDLESS, I HAVE NO INTEREST IN **SHARING** WITH ANYONE WHAT IT IS THAT I **THINK** I KNOW.



I'LL GET TO THE POINT.

RA'S HAS BEEN TO SEE YOU **RECENTLY**. I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS AS TO HIS **REASONS**, AND I'LL NOT **BURDEN** YOU WITH THEM, AS I WILL NOT BURDEN YOU WITH HOW I KNOW THESE THINGS.

SUFFICE IT TO SAY, **WHATEVER** HE HAS **OFFERED** OR **PROMISED** YOU, IT IS A LIE.



HE IS **DESPERATE**, AND HE WILL DO **ANYTHING** TO GET WHAT HE **WANTS.**

EVEN IF IT REQUIRES **KILLING** YOU.



I SEE.

WHY ARE
YOU TELLING
ME THIS?



YOU ARE NOT
THE **ONLY** PERSON
IN CONFLICT WITH
THE DEMON'S HEAD,
MISTER WAYNE.

AND THE
ENEMY OF **MY**
ENEMY IS MY
FRIEND.



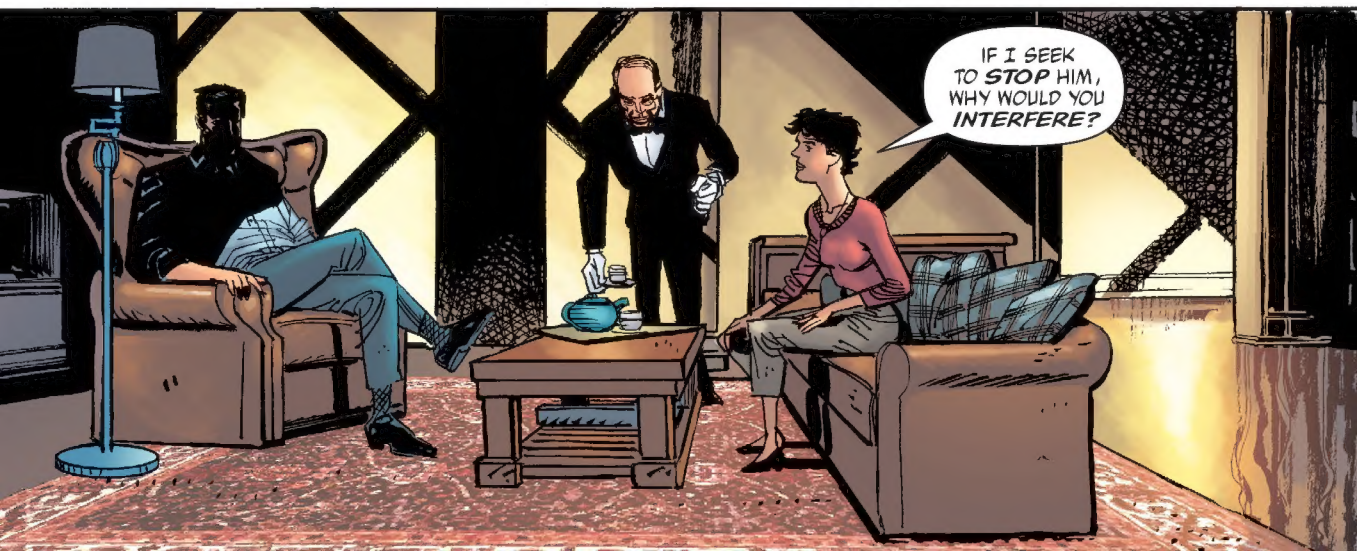
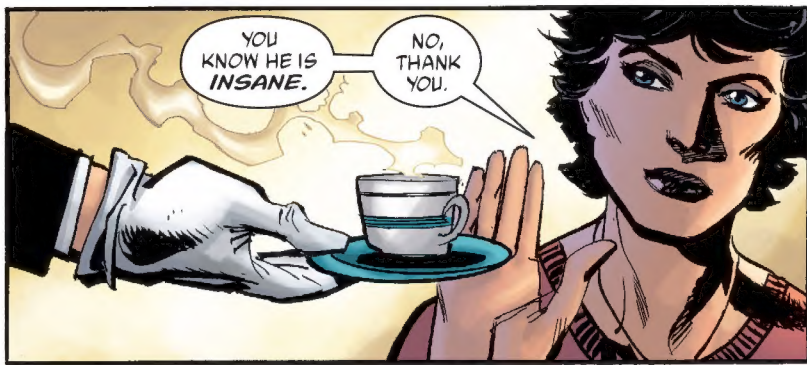
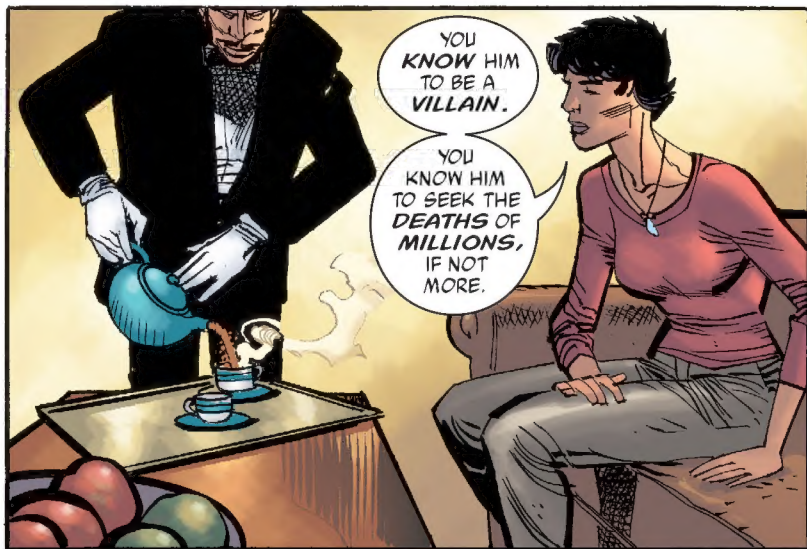
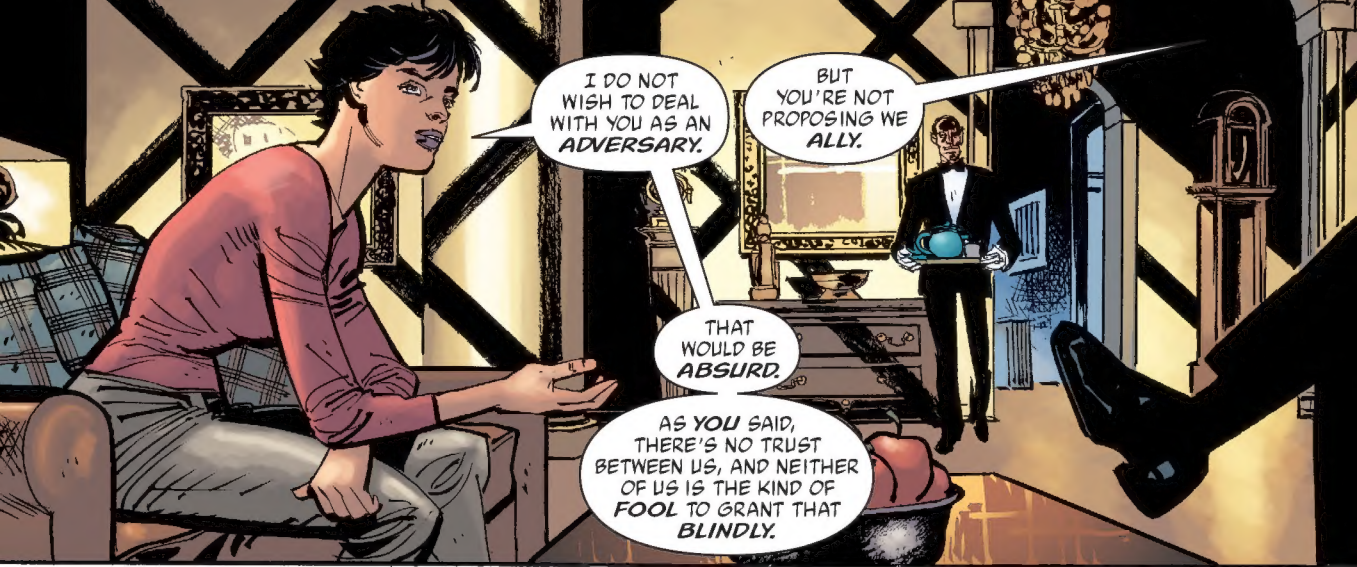
SPOKEN
LIKE **RA'S**
HIMSELF

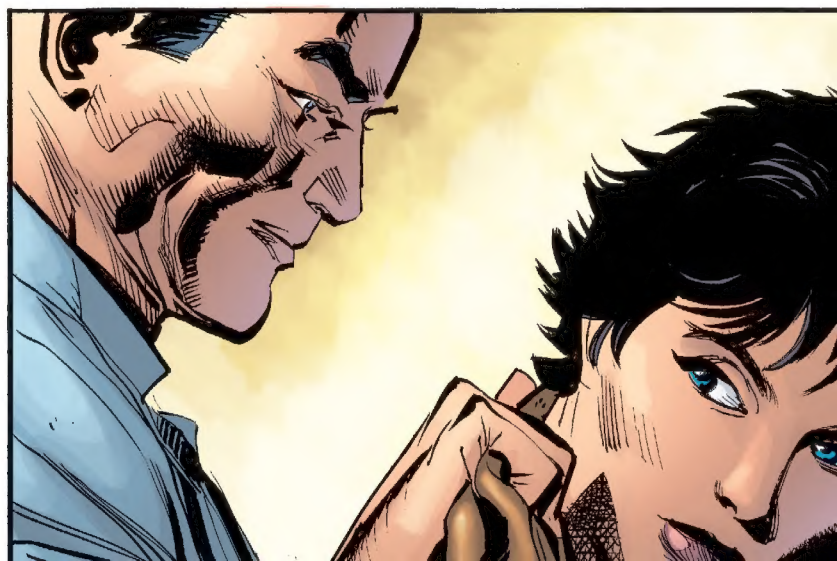
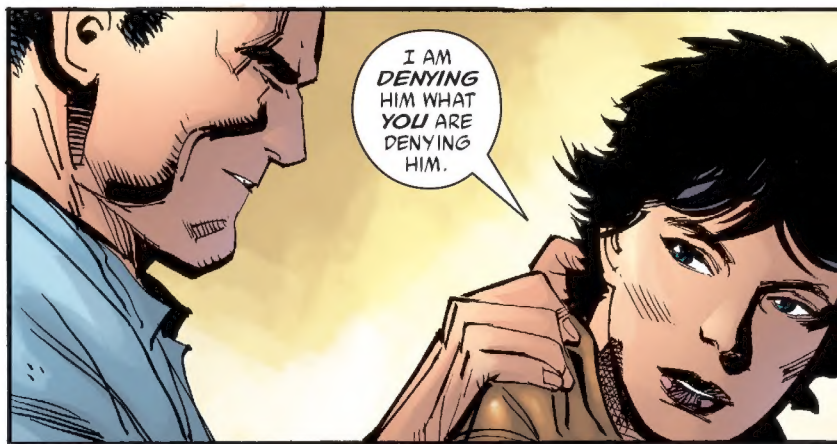
ANY
SIMILARITY
ENDS THERE,
I ASSURE
YOU.



LET ME
PUT IT AS
PLAINLY
AS I CAN.

I AM IN
CONFLICT WITH
HIM, AND HIS **VISIT**
TO YOU HAS ME
WORRIED.







"WAIT!"



NORTH AFRICA,
209 MILES E.S.E. OF
TRIPLOLI, 1809.

DAMNIT,
NYSSA, I
SAID WAIT!

THERE IS
NOTHING
MORE TO
SAY.





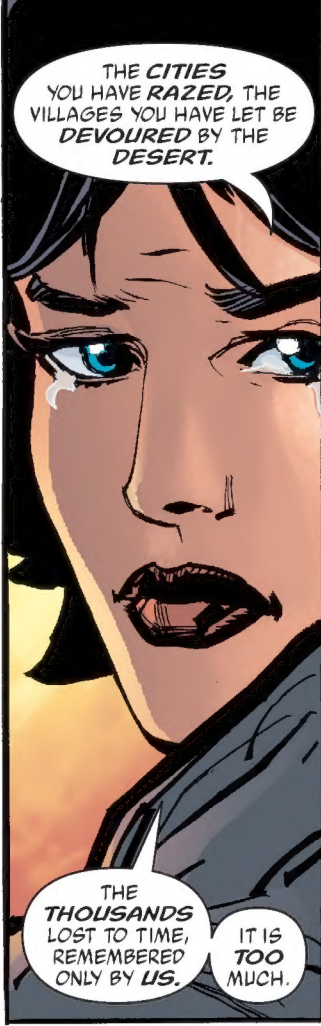


WE DON'T
WANT THE SAME
THINGS.



I HAVE
RIDDEN THE
SANDS WITH YOU, I
HAVE **FOUGHT**
YOUR ENEMIES AT
YOUR SIDE, I HAVE
SHARED THE
SPOILS OF
YOUR WAR.

I HAVE SEEN THE
PRINCES OF
PERSIA BOW AND
COWER, I HAVE SEEN
THEIR **SONS** GUTTED,
I HAVE SEEN THEIR
WOMEN WEEP.



THE **CITIES**
YOU HAVE **RAZED**, THE
VILLAGES YOU HAVE LET BE
DEVoured BY THE
DESERT.

THE
THOUSANDS
LOST TO TIME,
REMEMBERED
ONLY BY **US**.

IT IS
TOO
MUCH.



THE **WORK**
PAINS **ME** AS MUCH
AS IT PAINS **YOU**,
NYSSA.

I FEEL
THE **PAIN**
OF EVERY
DEATH I
CAUSE.



IT IS
FOR A
GREATER
GOOD.

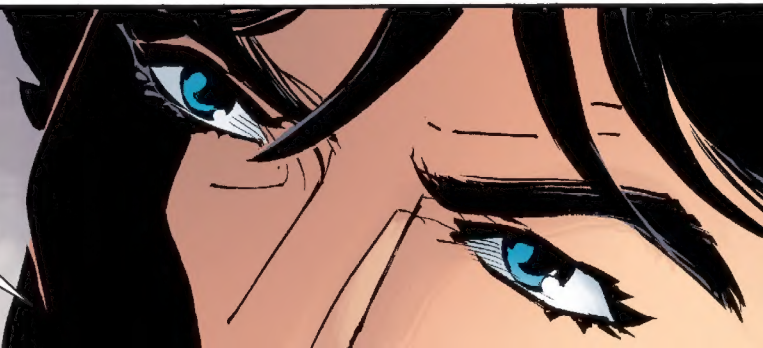
EVERY-
THING I HAVE
DONE, I DO FOR
THE **GREATER**
GOOD.

BUT I
CANNOT
DO IT ANY
LONGER.

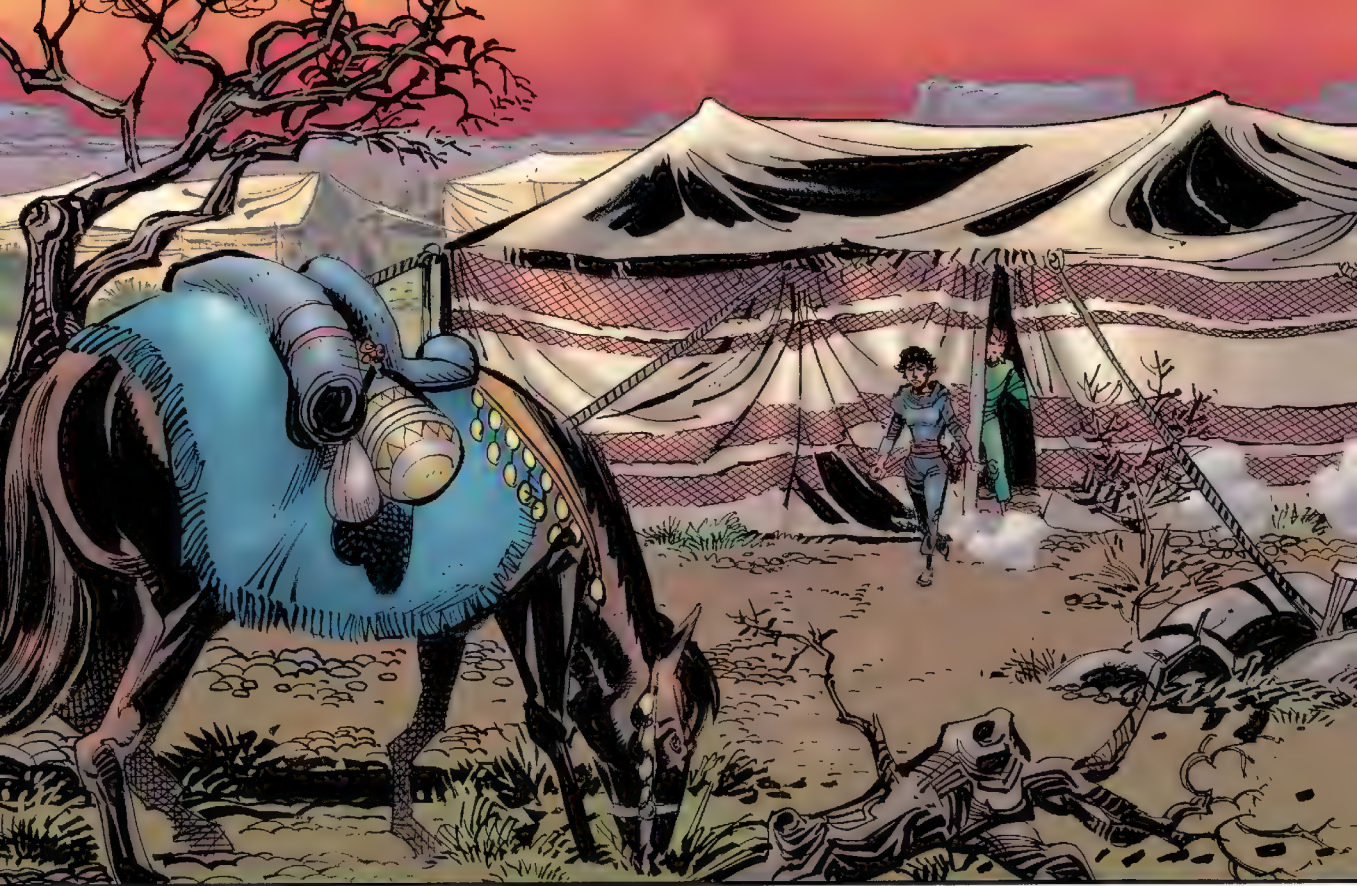


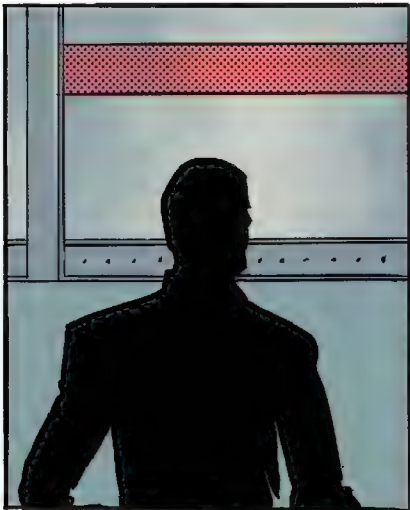
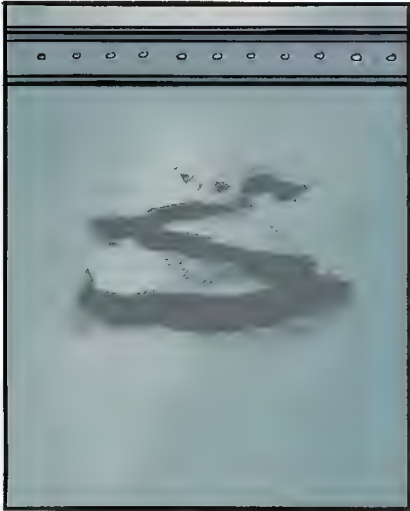
IT IS
YOUR
WAY TO THE
GREATER
GOOD.

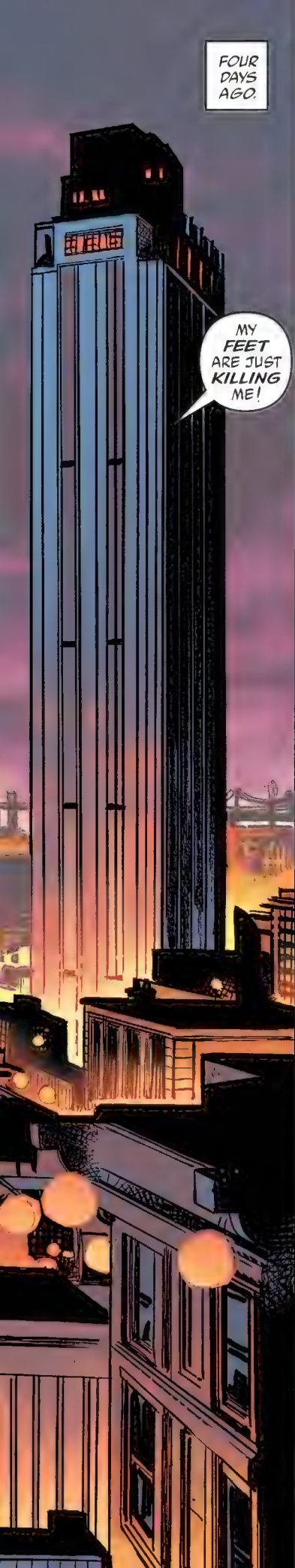
I MUST
FIND MY
OWN.











FOUR
DAYS
AGO.

MY
FEET
ARE JUST
KILLING
ME!

WAY
YOU WERE
DANCING, I'M
SURPRISED YOU
DON'T HAVE
BLISTERS,
TALIA!

I DON'T
THINK THERE
WAS A **MAN** IN
THE **PLACE** WHO
DIDN'T HAVE HIS
EYES ON YOU.



THAT WASN'T
ME, THAT WAS ALL THE
FREE CHAMPAGNE.



YOU SEDUCED
THEM ALL WITH
THE HELP OF
THOSE **TINY**
BUBBLES.

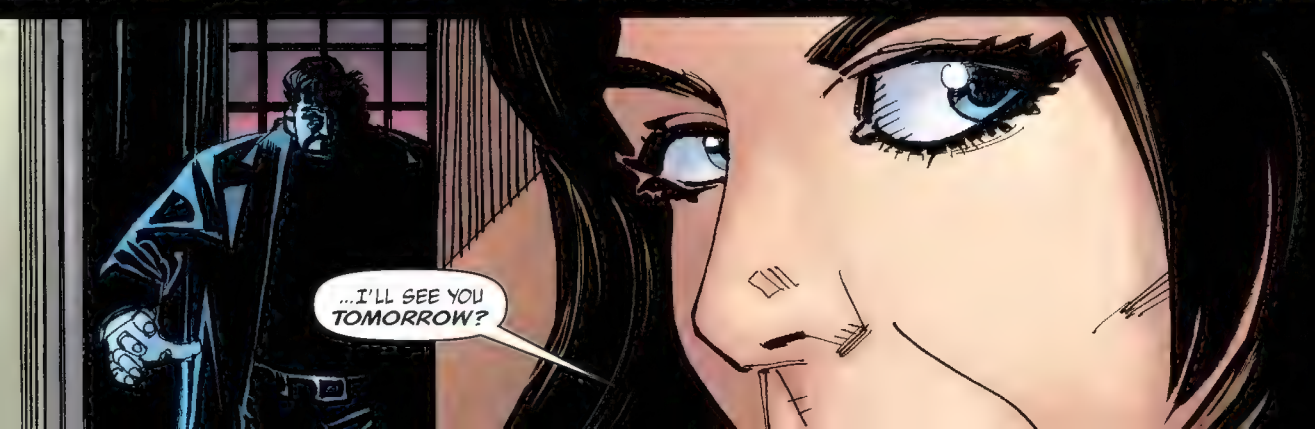
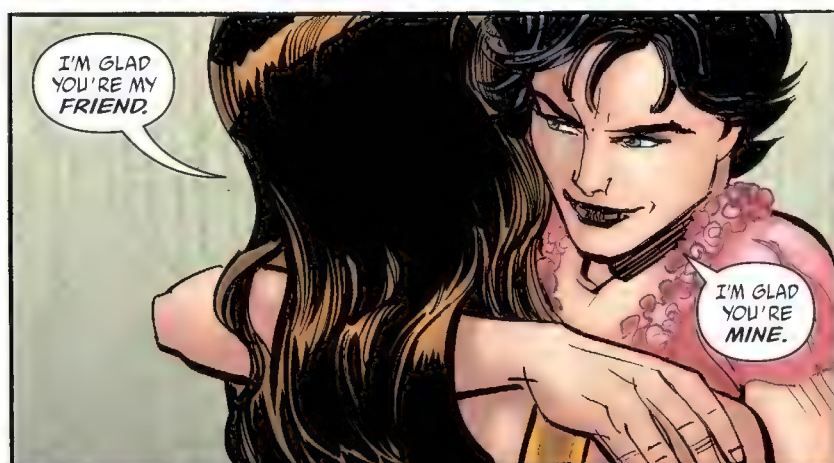
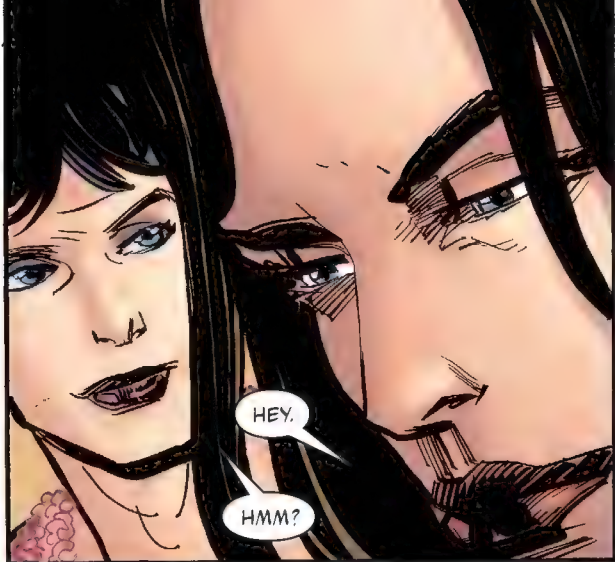
WHAT IS
IT THEY SAY
ABOUT FRED
ASTAIRE AND
GINGER
ROGERS?

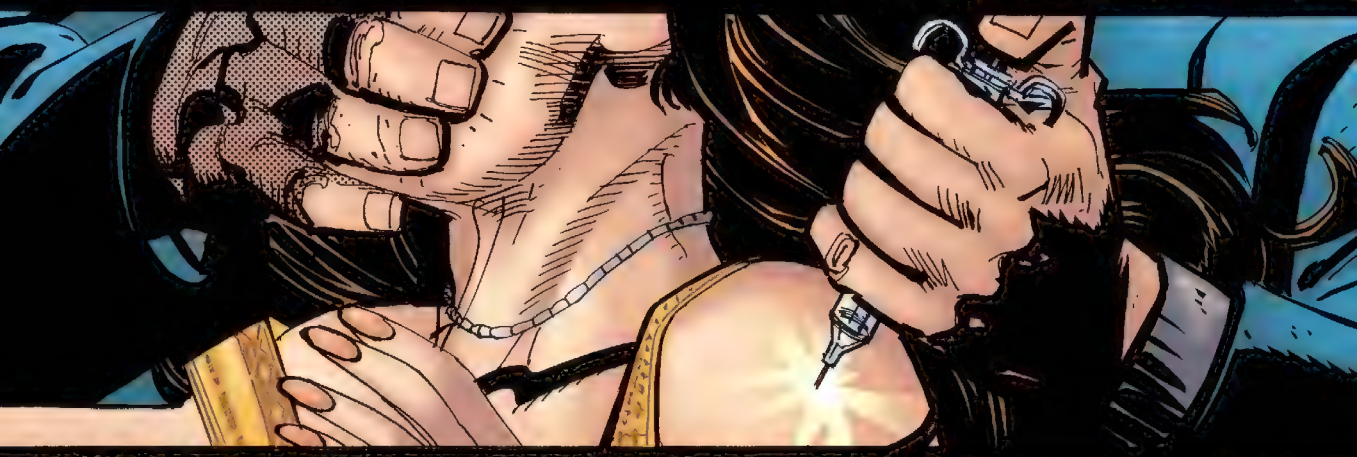


YOU MEAN
THE BIT ABOUT
HOW SHE HAD TO DO
EVERYTHING HE DID, BUT
BACKWARDS--



--AND
IN **HIGH**
HEELS!









THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, UBU.



WOULD YOU CARE FOR SOME TEA, DETECTIVE?

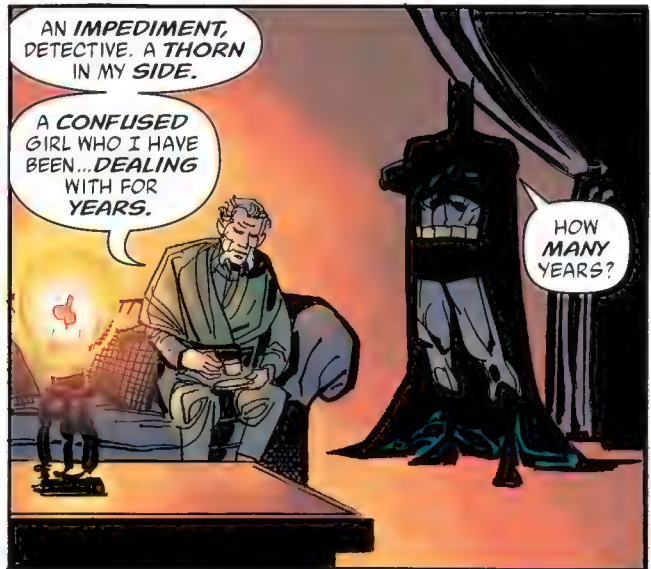
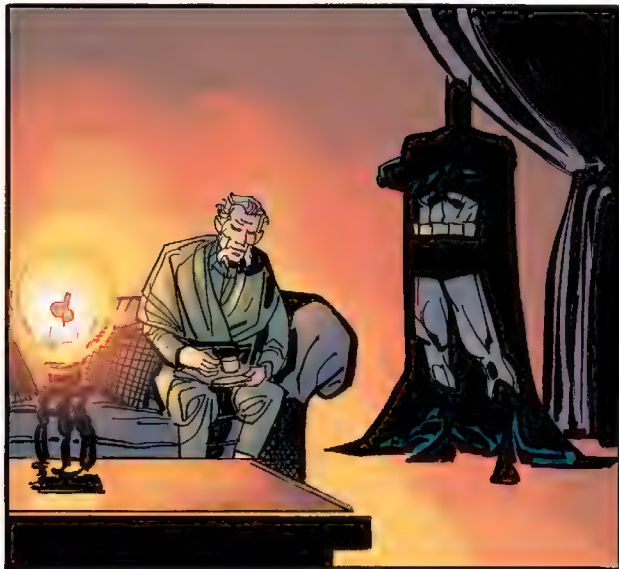
IT'S MY PERSONAL STOCK. I'VE BEEN ADJUSTING THE BLEND FOR YEARS.

NYSSA.

WHO IS SHE?



HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT NAME?



AN IMPEDIMENT, DETECTIVE. A THORN IN MY SIDE.

A CONFUSED GIRL WHO I HAVE BEEN...DEALING WITH FOR YEARS.

HOW MANY YEARS?



MANY, MANY YEARS, DETECTIVE.



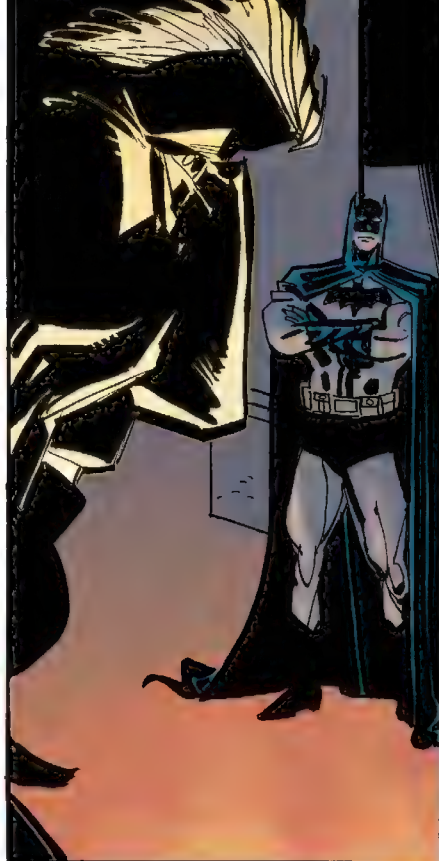
DID SHE COME TO YOU, DETECTIVE? PRECOCIOUS IN HER SEXUALITY, EARNEST IN HER DEMEANOR?

DID SHE SPEAK OF ME AS A VILLAIN, AS HER ENEMY?

WARN YOU OF MY GREAT EVIL?



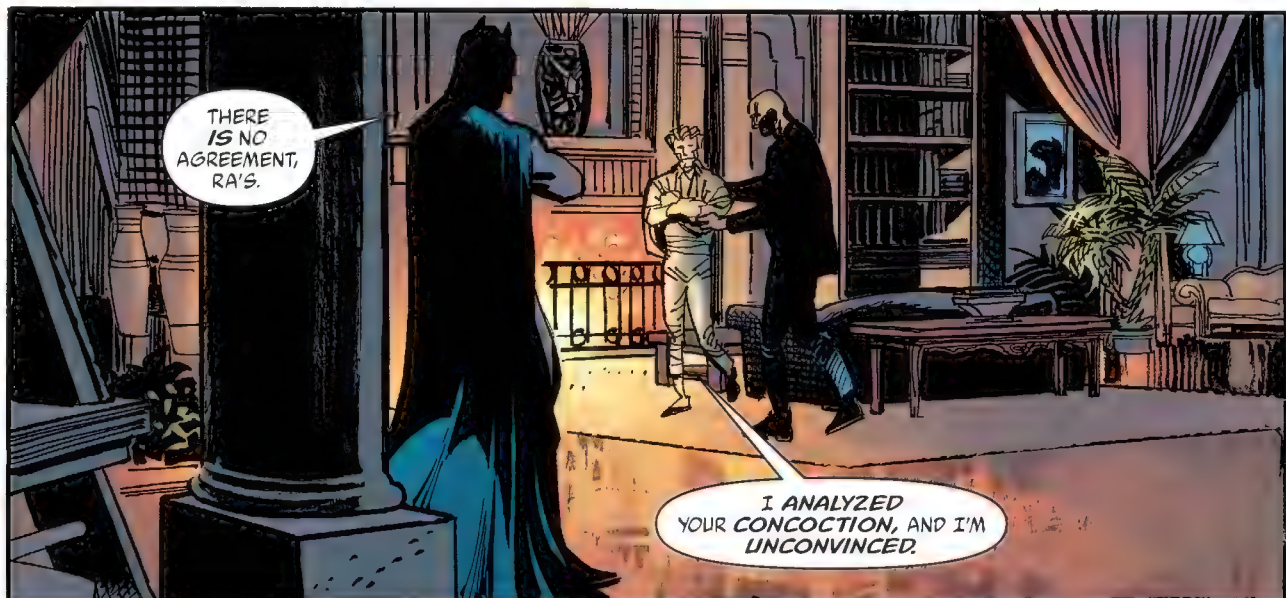
IT WASN'T
ANYTHING I DIDN'T
KNOW.



WE HAVE AN
AGREEMENT
IN PLACE, DO
WE NOT?

I **TRUST**
YOU WILL
HONOR IT.

I DESIRE
MY **PIT**, NOW,
DETECTIVE.



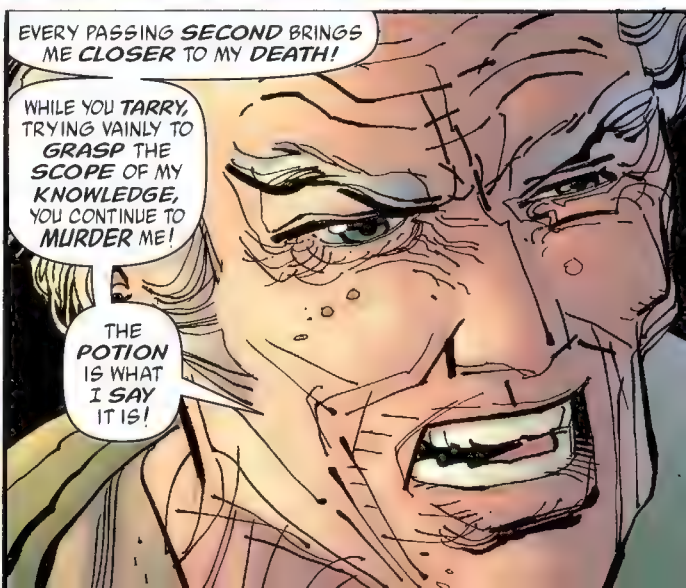
THERE
IS NO
AGREEMENT,
RA'S.

I ANALYZED
YOUR **CONCOCTION**, AND I'M
UNCONVINCED.



YOU HESITATE BECAUSE
YOUR **FEEBLE GRASP OF**
ALCHEMY DOES NOT
VALIDATE MY
CLAIMS?

YOU WASTE
TIME, DETECTIVE!
MY TIME!



EVERY PASSING **SECOND** BRINGS
ME **CLOSER** TO MY **DEATH**!

WHILE YOU **TARRY**,
TRYING VAINLY TO
GRASP THE
SCOPE OF MY
KNOWLEDGE,
YOU CONTINUE TO
MURDER ME!

THE
POTION
IS WHAT
I SAY
IT IS!





TALIA?

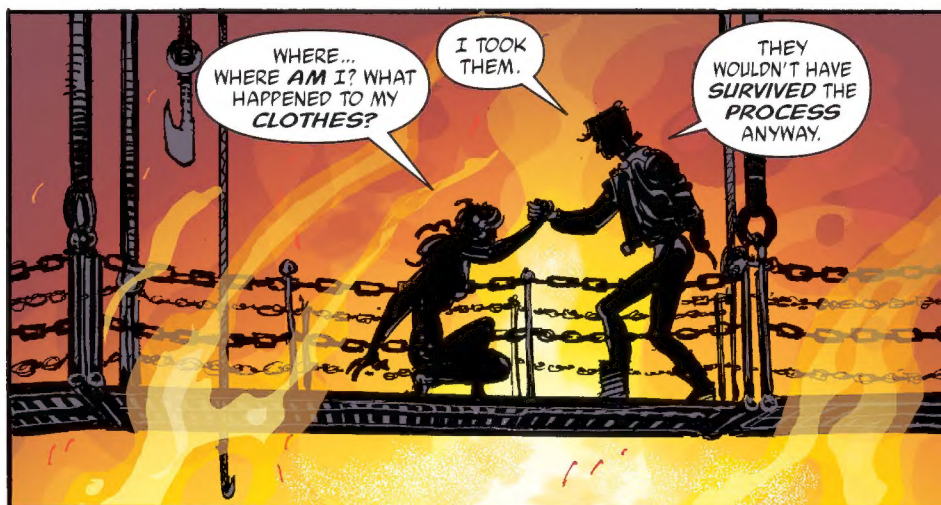
TALIA?
CAN YOU
HEAR
ME?



NYSSA...

...WH...WHAT
HAPPENED?

IT'S ALL
RIGHT, NOW.
YOU'RE ALL
RIGHT.



WHERE...
WHERE *AM* I? WHAT
HAPPENED TO MY
CLOTHES?

I TOOK
THEM.

THEY
WOULDN'T HAVE
SURVIVED THE
PROCESS
ANYWAY.

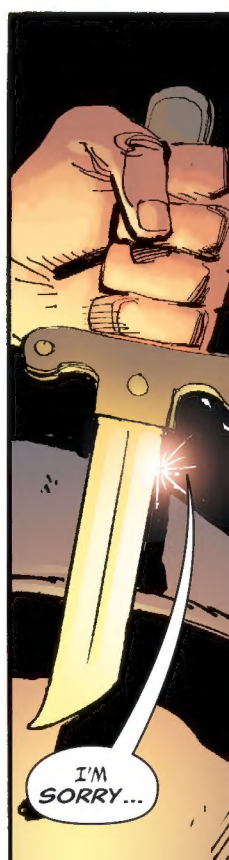


PROCESS?
WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING
ABOUT?

YOU'RE
SCARING ME,
NYSSA!



I KNOW.



I'M
SORRY...



...BUT IT'S
FOR THE
GREATER
GOOD.

From Baaldur, with love...

GLORITH





BATMAN

no. three

December 2003

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Rucka & Janson

DEATH AND THE MAIDENS

